

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 6-8 and 16-22 are pending in the instant patent application. Claims 2, 4, 5 and 9-15 were previously cancelled. Claims 16-22 have been withdrawn from consideration. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the instant application and pending Claims.

103 Rejection

Claims 1, 3 and 6-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(b) as being unpatentable over Tanaka (US Patent No. 6,756,675) in view of AAPA in view of Lin et al. (US Patent No. 6,765,228). Applicants have reviewed the cited references and respectfully submit that the embodiments of the claimed invention that are set forth in Claims 1, 3 and 6-8 are not anticipated or rendered obvious by Tanaka in view of AAPA in view of Lin et al.

The Examiner is respectfully directed to independent Claim 1 which is drawn to a semiconductor device. Claim 1 is reproduced in its entirety below for convenience of the Examiner.

1. A semiconductor device comprising:
 - a pad metal layer having a perimeter area and a center area;
 - a lower metal layer having a plurality of apertures below said center area of said pad metal layer, wherein said apertures are arranged into a plurality of rows each row comprising more than one of said apertures and a plurality of columns each column comprising more than one of said apertures;
 - an interlayer dielectric formed between said pad metal layer and said lower metal layer wherein said interlayer dielectric covers a portion of both the bottom and the sides of said pad metal layer;
 - a plurality of vias formed in said interlayer dielectric, wherein said plurality of vias electrically couple said pad metal layer and said lower metal layer, and wherein said plurality of vias form a ring arrangement that is located above and outside of the region occupied by said apertures in said lower metal layer and below an outermost perimeter area of said pad metal layer; and
 - an insulating dielectric layer that covers said perimeter area of said pad metal layer wherein said insulating dielectric layer covers a portion of both the

top and the sides of said pad metal layer and extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of said plurality of vias. (emphasis added)

Claims 3 and 6-8 depend from Claim 1 and recite additional limitations of embodiments of the claimed invention.

Tanaka in view of AAPA in view of Lin et al. is deficient as Tanaka does not teach or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 1 and AAPA and Lin et al. does not remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka. In particular, Tanaka does not teach or suggest a semiconductor device that includes an insulating dielectric layer and an interlayer dielectric that has a plurality of vias formed therein that is formed between a pad metal layer and a lower metal layer, “wherein said insulating dielectric layer covers a portion of both the top and the sides of said pad metal layer and extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of said plurality of vias” as is recited in Claim 1 (upon which Claims 3, 6 and 8 depend). Furthermore, AAPA and Lin et al. do not teach or suggest modifying Tanaka in a manner that remedies the above noted deficiencies of Tanaka.

Claim 1 has been amended to positively delimit that the recited insulating dielectric layer extends to the inside of the recited plurality of vias. Support for the newly added limitations can be found in Applicants’ drawings (see Figure 2). It should be appreciated that these limitations (along with the others recited in the Claims) must be taught or suggested by the cited reference in order for a proper prima facie case to be supported thereby. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the newly added limitations are not taught or suggested anywhere by Tanaka in view of AAPA and Lin et

al. If a rejection based on Tanaka in view of AAPA and Lin et al. is maintained, Applicants respectfully request that the parts of these references relied upon to teach the recited limitations be designated and clearly explained in accordance with MPEP 706 and 37 CFR 1.104(c)3.

As understood by Applicants, Tanaka discloses a semiconductor device that features a high density connecting region that is dissimilar to the claimed embodiments of Applicants' invention. In particular, Tanaka does not teach or suggest the limitations of Claim 1 that have to do with the disposition of the interlayer dielectric layer and the insulating dielectric layer with respect to the pad metal layer. In the outstanding Office Action, structures shown in FIGS. 1-2B of Tanaka are characterized as follows: protecting film 240 is alleged to teach the recited insulating dielectric layer, insulating layer 150 is alleged to teach the recited interlayer dielectric layer, third electrode layer 100 is alleged to teach the recited pad metal layer and structures 110a-110d, 112a, 115a, 116a and 117a are alleged to teach the recited vias.

Applicants respectfully submit that protecting film 240 is very different from the recited insulating dielectric that it is alleged to teach. For example, as admitted in the outstanding Office Action at page 3, Tanaka does not teach or suggest that protecting film 240 covers both a portion of the bottom and the sides of electrode layer 100. Moreover, Tanaka does not teach or suggest that protecting film 240 extend laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of the plurality of vias (110a-110d, 112a, 115a, 116a and 117a).

AAPA does not teach or suggest a modification of Tanaka that that would remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka discussed above. In particular, AAPA does not teach or suggest a semiconductor device that includes an insulating dielectric layer and an interlayer dielectric that has a plurality of vias formed therein that is formed between a pad metal layer and a lower metal layer, “wherein said insulating dielectric layer covers a portion of both the top and the sides of said pad metal layer and extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of said plurality of vias” as is recited in Claim 1 (upon which Claims 3, 6 and 8 depend). As it regards AAPA, Figure 1 clearly shows an insulating dielectric layer that does not extend laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of the plurality of vias. In fact, referring to Figure 1, the insulating dielectric layer does not even extend to the outermost perimeter of the plurality of vias. Accordingly, AAPA cannot reasonably be considered to teach or suggest a modification of Tanaka that would remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka discussed above.

Lin et al. does not teach or suggest a modification of Tanaka and AAPA that would remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka and AAPA discussed above. In particular, Lin et al. does not teach or suggest a semiconductor device that includes an insulating dielectric layer and an interlayer dielectric that has a plurality of vias formed therein which is formed between a pad metal layer and a lower metal layer, “wherein said insulating dielectric layer covers a portion of both the top and the sides of said pad metal layer and extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of said plurality of vias” as is recited in Claim 1 (upon which Claims 3, 6 and 8 depend).

As understood by Applicants, Lin et al. shows a bonding pad with separate bonding and probing areas. Applicants respectfully submit that the device that is disclosed by Lin et al. is very dissimilar to claimed embodiments of Applicants' invention. Lin et al. is concerned with accommodating the probing of a semiconductor device in an area of the semiconductor device that is different from the area of the semiconductor device in which bonding is effected. Lin et al. discloses that this is accomplished by designating portions of an elongated, rectangular bonding pad for each of the aforementioned purposes (see Abstract). However, Lin et al. does not teach or suggest an insulating dielectric layer that extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of a plurality of vias as recited in Applicants' Claim 1. In fact, Lin et al. does not teach an insulating dielectric layer at all. Accordingly, Lin et al. cannot reasonably be considered to teach or suggest a modification of Tanaka that would remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka discussed above.

Based on Applicants' aforementioned review of Tanaka, AAPA and Lin et al., Applicants respectively submit that nowhere therein is a semiconductor device taught or suggested that includes an insulating dielectric layer and an interlayer dielectric that has a plurality of vias formed therein that is formed between a pad metal layer and a lower metal layer, "wherein said insulating dielectric layer covers a portion of both the top and the sides of said pad metal layer and extends laterally inside of the innermost perimeter of said plurality of vias" as is recited in Claim 1 (upon which Claims 3, 6 and 8 depend).

Consequently, as alluded to above, Tanaka in view of AAPA and Lin et al. fails to teach or suggest all of the limitations recited in Claim 1.

With regard to Claim 6, Applicants respectfully submit that nowhere in the Tanaka, AAPA and Lin et al. references is a semiconductor device taught or suggested that includes as features the above discussed limitations of Claim 1 and further includes as features the limitations “wherein a probing process is performed on said center area of said pad metal layer” as are set forth in Claim 6. With regard to Claim 7, Applicants respectfully submit that nowhere in the Tanaka, AAPA and Lin et al. references is a semiconductor device taught or suggested that includes as features the above discussed limitations of Claim 1 and further includes as features the limitations “wherein a wire-bonding process is performed on said center area of said pad metal layer” as are set forth in Claim 7. With regard to Claim 8, Applicants respectfully submit that nowhere in the Tanaka, AAPA and Lin et al. references is a semiconductor device taught or suggested that includes as features the above discussed limitations of Claim 1 and further includes as features the limitations “wherein said semiconductor device is an integrated chip” as are set forth in Claim 8 taught or suggested.

Because of deficiencies of Tanaka, AAPA and Lin et al. discussed above, Applicants respectfully submit that Tanaka in view of AAPA and Lin et al. does not provide an adequate basis for rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103 and, as such, Claim 1 is allowable. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 3 and

6-8 dependent on Claim 1 are likewise allowable at least as being dependent on allowable base claims.

CONCLUSION

For at least the above provided reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all remaining claims are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative if the Examiner believes such action would expedite resolution of the present Application. Please charge any additional fees or apply any credits to our PTO deposit account number: 50-4160

Respectfully submitted,

Murabito, Hao & Barnes LLP

Date: November 25, 2008

/Reginald A. Ratliff/
Reginald A. Ratliff
Reg. No.: 48,098
Two North Market Street
Third Floor
San Jose, California 95113